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SEP 13 2004
RMR-S-100
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: <yose_planning@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS

September 10, 2004

RE: Revised Merced River Plan/SEIS

Concerning the Merced Wild and Scenic River Revised Comprehensive Management Plan and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS):
Reassessing the river boundary in the El Portal Administrative Site, and
Establishing a user capacity for the entire length of the Merced river corridor;

Our hope is a very general one: We hope that this important, scenic natural treasure will receive the highest protection possible so that the river and surrounding area will, indeed, be wild and free--free from the intrusion of human development as much as possible:

Thank you!

Long Beach, CA

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RMA-5-112
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To: yose_planning@nps.gov

Subject: Fw: FoYV Alert: Sept 10, Comments Due.....

Dear Park Planning Staff:

I have been coming to Yosemite since I was four year old and am deeply disappointed in the planning processes that have taken place over the years. I COMPLETELY support the Friends of Yosemite Valley and ALL of their comments and suggestions as listed below.

Sincerely,

1) PRIORITY OF WSRA: A river is designated Wild and Scenic based on specific outstanding values which are known as the "outstandingly remarkable values" (ORVs) of the River. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) requires protection and enhancement of these identified values of the River for which it was designated Wild and Scenic. It does NOT allow for uses which degrade the ORVs.

The Act places primary emphasis on protecting the river's esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeologic, and scientific features.

2) BASE RIVER PLAN ON ORVs: The Merced River Plan must be BASED on protecting and enhancing the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) of the Merced River. The Merced is a designated Wild and Scenic River. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) mandates that the Rivers Values not only be PROTECTED, but also ENHANCED! If this plan once again fails to truly protect the River's values, the plan will again be a failure.

Start the planning process with identifying where each ORVs occurs (eg not merely where an animal nests, but its range and the plants, other animals, river processes, and so on upon which it relies and with which it interacts), what it is affected by (eg River backwaters, tributaries, other animals, plants, noise, proximity to lodging, night-lights), what it effects, and so on, and build the plan from that essential picture and platform.

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FoYV has suggested to the River Plan planning team that they put a sign up over the table at which they meet stating, "IT'S THE ORVs".

3) SCOPE OF SCOPING AND INTERRELATIONSHIP OF USER CAPACITY TO "ZONING" AND OTHER MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS:

NPS is improperly attempting to limit the scope of scoping comments by stating in their scoping period announcements that they will not revisit River Plan management elements other than user capacity and El Portal District boundaries.

* The Park Service's determination on user capacity and boundaries in El Portal cannot be made in isolation and then simply inserted into the old Merced River Plan. Rather, decisions about capacity and boundaries must be integrated into a new or revised CMP and considered in combination with other management elements, which may need to be revised, or revisited to meet the Park Service's duty to protect and enhance ORVs. For example, the amount of use an area can sustain is linked to how the resource is to be used.

* The Appeals Court ruled, "While we remanded to 'the district court to enter an appropriate order requiring the [National Park Service] to remedy these deficiencies [user capacity and El Portal area boundaries] in the CMP [Merced River Plan] in a timely manner,' id. At 803, we did not 'otherwise uphold the [CMP].'"

* Scoping is supposed to be taking a fresh look. We invite NPS to join together with the concerned public to use this opportunity to cut through the veil of bureaucracy and NPS management's current view of visitors as "customers," and instead forge this plan around real protection for the Merced River's Values. Rather than continuing to be driven by predetermined Yosemite Valley Plan development projects and inappropriate goals -- such as bringing the amenities and experiences of suburbia and resorts to Yosemite and the visitor experience, focus on the purpose of the Wild and Scenic River Act to truly protect Yosemite's Merced River.

* Rethinking the River Protection Overlay; the invalid plan's "zoning program;" and the Section 7 determination process, as presented in the old Merced River Plan, is critical to upholding a protective user capacity. Other management methods than the two former, could be more appropriate and protective.

* The so-called "River Protection Overlay" does not protect the River despite its Orwellian name. It allows for roads, building, maintenance and storage areas (such as in Wawona at the South Fork of the Merced) under the rubric of Administrative uses. We need to remind the NPS that the full quarter mile of the River Wild and Scenic corridor is supposed to be protected.

* The "Zoning" management tool needs to be thrown out. It is not based on the River's ORVs and it is not protective of the ORVs. If the revised River Plan still contains the zoning management element, it will not be based on the ORVs and the plan will once again not be a protective plan. The Merced River, and its ORVs, is a national treasure, not a grid on a planning use map for a city.

* The Merced River Plan should not be used (again) as a tool to allow development plans.

* Determination of user capacity must be built around specific defined

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conditions of each of the River's values as a baseline beyond which value can be allowed to be degraded, and must be protected and enhanced. The River plan should show specifically for each river value how, where, and by what means each value (ORV) will be protected and enhanced.

* I want to know about the condition of each River value so, as a concerned member of the public, I can take an active role in monitoring and protecting this public value.

4) EQUITY, CAMPING, "RESTORATION": In 1997, the National Park Service closed the Rivers and other campgrounds. This removed 40% of the camping in Yosemite Valley. At the same NPS, they began planning a \$441,000,000 construction/pavement/development project which came to be called the Yosemite Valley Plan and included scores of new motel buildings for Yosemite Valley. Meanwhile since 1997 more lodging has continued to be built in the Yosemite gateway communities. With this increase in nearby lodging, there is no valid reason to build new upscale lodging units in Yosemite Valley -- but that is what NPS intends, and at taxpayer expense -- in essence subsidizing the private for-profit monopoly Yosemite concession with our money.

The NPS is now saying that is it going to "restore" the areas where it removed the campgrounds in 1997. While it is not clear that their plan (which should not be on the table now and was not allowed to go forward by the Court until a revised valid River Plan is finished) will actually be the restoration they claim, as it is in a high-use area they zone as "Day-Use" in the invalid River Plan. What is sure is that the public never had the opportunity to comment on this removal of 40% of the camping in Yosemite Valley. The revised River Plan should have an alternative that restores these 40% of camping spots removed, but not in new areas. Moving impacts into new areas is not protecting ORVs or the ecosystem. Perhaps it is some of the Lodge buildings that should be removed. Camping could be considered to be put there for example.

So this claimed "restoration" would be on the back of Yosemite Valley campers, while unnecessary upscale resort hotels are build in Yosemite Valley. This former camping area is the main "restoration" (6% of the \$441,000.00 plan) part of the Yosemite Valley Plan. Almost all of the rest of the Yosemite Valley Plan (see the YVP) is for development, construction, concession amenities, employee housing to house the additional employees needed to support this additional infrastructure and level of services (changing motel room sheets, ice cream parlors, etc). And the Valley Plan makes clear (although the NPS press releases and public materials give the opposite impression) that the \$441,000,000 plan will bring more miles of asphalt both in Yosemite Valley and in the rest of Yosemite Park. Pretty sad. However, if the River plan is a truly protective plan, this would not happen under it. This is the litmus test of the revised River Plan that NPS will put out.

Camping in Yosemite Valley directly connects visitors with the natural values for which Yosemite was saved. An upscale resort style hotel can be built anywhere and is not an appropriate use of a national treasure. Camping allows lower income and other families to enjoy Yosemite's spectacular natural values on their own terms. It allows families to bring in their own supplies, their food, their bicycles, their rafts, their children's strollers, etc. They are not dependent on the concessionaire.

The average family is being more and more shut out of Yosemite as Yosemite becomes more and more of a resort/Disney style destination.

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This is how not only the concessionaire, but also the NPS markets Yosemite. This is not equitable. Camping is also an important opportunity for social interaction in Yosemite which builds democracy. Lodging separates people both physically from social interactions and stratifies them economically.

5) THE MARKETING OF YOSEMITE AND USER CAPACITY: While the National park Service has eliminated any user capacity numbers for Yosemite, it markets Yosemite as a part of quickie all-in-one-day tour packages -- actively enticing more people to tour and impact the Park's natural values. The Park Service then claims that it has to accommodate these tourists with ever increasing amounts of and increasingly upscaled types of accommodations.

Usually people on such tour packages spend a mere few hours in Yosemite, while leaving dollars in the concessionaires pockets and a large impact on Yosemite's resources. Rather than taking home a priceless in-depth experience of Yosemite's natural values, they rush from spot to spot to take quick photos, purchase souvenirs, and eat. Rather than Yosemite leaving a lasting impact on them, their impact leaves a lasting impression on Yosemite.

National Park Service press release: "Yosemite National Park Employees Attend Travel Expo [in China] to Promote Tourism to National Parks"
http://www.yosemitevalley.org/HTML/Articles/2002_07_01.html

Now that the Court has ordered NPS to adequately address user capacities, how will this mesh with the concession and the nps marketing of Yosemite? The Yosemite Valley Plan says it will accommodate the tourists as they come by building ever increasing outlying parking lots, bus systems, and a 22 bay urban style bus depot in Yosemite Valley with buses arriving in peak season every 1.4 minutes (see YVP -- yes, it's in there).

Look at the Lower Yosemite Fall project (if you can stand it). It controls tourist pedestrian traffic through a maze of split rail fencing and obtrusive stone walls. Do not deal with impacts by putting up more fences, instead the concessioner and the National Park Service should stop marketing Yosemite as part of intensive tour packages and stop working to grow the numbers of tourists (dollars). Is this the kind of Yosemite experience you want? Separated from nature? Directed around by fencing?

Most people stay on the trails. The occasional family group or group of friends that ventures off a trail, does not degrade the values, but the NPS degrades the values through their massive construction/destruction projects. The El Portal Road widening, the unnatural grading throughout the 56 acres braided alluvial braided stream area from the ongoing Lower Fall project with the overbuilt bridges with 20' footings (inappropriate according to the NPS hydrologist in the Freedom of Information Request info we have) which will prevent natural processes (degrading the hydrologic ORV), the overbuilt bus stop in one of the most scenic areas in the world (degrading the scenic ORV), the overbuilt bathroom edifice built on top of archeologic sites (degrading the archeologic ORV), and a monument to disrespect, and on and on.

6) VALLEY PLAN PROJECTS already have been planned by the NPS based on a River Plan determined by the court to be invalid. Those projects include a myriad of interrelated plans and projects in the Yosemite Valley Plan. These plans and projects and the Yosemite Valley Plan needs to be

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revisited and based on a valid/protective revised CMP/SEIS.

For Example:

* Curry Employee Dorms and Rockfall Danger: Construction for sleeping quarters for these "lower level" employees is scheduled to begin soon. However, less than a year ago and a mere 300' from this construction area, a dangerous rockfall occurred in which rocks and boulders fell through roofs and damaged 10 inhabited duplex cabins at Curry Village, in which at least one person was almost hit. (documented in an NPS categorical exclusion for repairs) Perhaps the NPS planners and administrators who signed off on this plan should sleep on the top floor of these dorms? At minimum and certainly before any construction and any more planning resources are put into this project, the Valley Wall above this area needs to be thoroughly studied for rockfall potential. And the 27 planned dormitory buildings' area studied for potential bounce zone.

An NPS official told a FoYV representative at one of the scoping meetings that nps was surprised by the ricochet effect that took place. Does NPS really intend to let employees' be potentially surprised by this ricochet effect when they are sleeping?

* Before any more development is planned or construction commenced in Yosemite Valley, a rockfall/bounce zone/ blow down map of at least the Eastern portion of Yosemite Valley needs to be completed and incorporated into the River Plan for the public to see. Perhaps the construction of the amphitheater at Glacier Point with its attendant dynamite blasting has loosened the Valley Wall in that area? Perhaps the leach field and sewage leakage problems at the Glacier Point bathrooms have loosened the Valley Wall in that area? A geologist proposed to the National Park Service to put blue dye into the Glacier Point toilets to see where the sewage water was flowing, the NPS refused to let him do that study.

* The Curry Employee Dorm area is also an important area which climbers use for bouldering, the "Root Canal" boulder is in that area. Yet NPS will destroy that opportunity if the Employee Dorms are built there. That area was undisturbed until nps did a preemptive logging well before any construction was scheduled to begin. The court injunction stopping tree cutting was too late for many of the trees logged to make way for the dorm construction.

* The Yosemite Lodge Plan calls for new lodges in the River Corridor and plans to bulldoze and cut a new road adjacent to the River, rather than use the existing road which is away from the River. This project would destroy River ORVs. For example, it is now an easily accessible opportunity to enjoy a quiet walk along the river enjoying grazing deer and squawking Stellar's Jays, to contemplate the River's oxbow and meander and enjoy the water plants in the River's special backwater in that area as well as wonderful solemn views of Sentinel Peak. A road with buses driving through it would destroy that area and that experience.

* The closures of the Upper and Lower Rivers and Group Campgrounds by NPS in 1997 was never put out for public comment. This area was subsequently "zoned" for "Day Use" in the invalid River Plan; thereby eliminating 40% of the camping in Yosemite Valley. NPS now improperly argues that it is already "zoned" for "Day Use". As a part of the Draft CMP/SEIS, the public should at last have the opportunity to consider and comment on the use of this area in at least one alternative.

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* The Curry Village Redevelopment Plan calls for more upscale lodging requiring more infrastructure and more employees (an additional 405 Park-wide). Who, in turn, require more infrastructure -- all this when more and more lodging since 1997, and almost each year since, has already been (and is being?) built in the gateway communities outside the Park -- violating Park Management Policies. The Plan calls for destroying undisturbed areas to replace a minute number of the 300 camping spaces closed by NPS in 1997. Instead of building new expensive resort-style hotel lodging in the Park (more profits for the concessionaire), relocate the 40% of Yosemite Valley campgrounds closed by NPS in 1997, into those "lodging" areas, changing them into camping areas. (Protective of the ORVs of the Merced and beneficial to public values and our right to experience the natural values of the River.)

* The El Portal Area Wild and Scenic River Corridor is more important biologically than understood years ago. In addition, some River values still remain in El Portal which have been degraded or lost elsewhere along the River.

* The El Portal Road Segment from Pohono Bridge to the 120/140 Highway split, (known also as, "Segment D"), saved from being destructively widened in 1999 by the Court. The River Plan must protect this area's ORVs. The only way to do that is to NOT WIDEN THE ROAD. The geologic and scientific ORV in which the "U" shaped Yosemite Valley turns into the "V" shaped Yosemite Gorge is the area with the granite wall which forms this ORV. If the road were to be widened, either that ORV would be degraded or destroyed, or the road would encroach into the Merced River, and also destroy rare old Canyon Live Oaks growing along the River side of the Road. Either way, widening the road would not be protective, and in fact would be destructive.

* The Merced River Plan should not be used again as a tool to allow development plans.

7) AMEND CONCESSION SERVICES PLAN: The Concession Services Plan (CSP) was put into place 5 years after the Merced was designated a Wild and Scenic River. However, at that time, 1992, there was no valid legally mandated Comprehensive Plan for the Merced River. Therefore, the Concession Service Plan, along with the General Management Plan which it amended, needs to be changed to specifically ensure protection and enhancement of the ORVs of the Merced River.

In addition, the CSP will be up for renewal and change in 2007. The River Plan is a 20 year plan. NPS should not lock in the current concession plan with its myriad of concession opportunities and amenities in this River Plan. That would be an unbelievably huge mistake. However, that is precisely what the zoning in the illegal plan does. This needs to be changed.

For Example:

* The number of hotel units and concession eating areas may need to be reduced.

* The Merced High Sierra Camp, which is in designated wilderness, may need to be replaced with a lower impact campground due to various impacts such as the ongoing serious bacterial water contamination in the Merced River (see nps document) from horse and stock feces.

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* The concessionaire rafting (as opposed to families/individuals bringing their own raft) may need to be discontinued due to the high impact of multiple rafts entering the river at the same point and the impact of concession diesel trucks picking up the rafts in places that would otherwise be a quiet experience, such as Sentinel Beach.

8) A FULL RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES must be presented to the public which REVISE the River Plan IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE ORDER FROM THE COURT to PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE MERCED RIVER'S OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES. We ask that these all be viable protective alternatives so the public has the opportunity to consider various valid options.

9) ALL SCOPING COMMENTS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC by OCT 10, 04. Put out a CD containing all the public scoping comments as written (not excerpts) so the public can know what others are concerned about and what ideas people put forward. We want this to be a public dialogue not a one-way street.

10) ACCOUNTABILITY -- OR LACK THEREOF: So where is the accountability for the numerous plans deemed illegal in the courts? Where is the accountability for the excessive use of resources for all the over planning and over constructing that has been done and is being planned to be done in Yosemite? Where is the accountability for the close to \$100,000,000 spent by NPS since 1997 (or what is the figure?, the public would like to know how much and exactly where it was spent?) The next time NPS builds yet another building in Yosemite, it could be built by using those truck loads of trees logged by NPS in Yosemite and by and stacking the tons of planning documents generated since 1997 for the walls and structure, we would not even want to try to list those documents.

What is the purpose of having NPS officials sign off on the Record of Decisions of planning documents? We assumed it was an attempt to hold someone accountable. But we have seen no one held accountable. The more illegal and overbuild/overblown plans and projects, the higher in rank people seem to rise.

It is a concern that the same head of planning for the River Plan that was not protective and was declared illegal in the court, is now the head of the planning for the revised plan. A fresh look at the planning process and the management tools is needed to create a protective plan with management tools that are not made to implement Yosemite Valley Plan projects, but are made to focus on Merced River ORVs and their protection. Will that happen?

B. General Categories of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River in Yosemite -- 81 miles including the Main Stem which runs from the high Sierra through Yosemite Valley, down the Merced River Gorge, and through the El Portal Administrative District; and the South Fork which runs from the high Sierra in Yosemite, and out through Wawona.

The ORVs: biologic, scenic, geologic, scientific, cultural/archeologic, recreation, hydrologic processes. The National Park Service has stated that by being more general in their descriptions of the ORVs they can better protect the ORVs. On the contrary, in the River Plan, NPS needs to be transparent and specific in their description and discussion of the ORVs, their locations, interactions with other animals, plants, processes, etc. The public should understand the specifics of the ORVs in order to be able to help watch and follow and participate in working towards and monitoring their protection and enhancement (Except of

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course archeologic sites. Although, it is the NPS itself that is creating vast amounts of disturbance and degradation of archeology sites through their construction projects). The current data and surveys of ORVs should be a part of the River Plan, and as data is collected, it should be put up on the NPS web site. The public that loves Yosemite and appreciates the Park's special values, can be the eyes and ears that are most helpful in the Park's and ORVs' monitoring and protection. The many knowledgeable members of the public will watch and make known if an ORV is not being protected. Wouldn't the NPS want this help?

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Now that the Court has ordered NPS to adequately address user capacities, how will this mesh with the concession and the nps marketing of Yosemite? The Yosemite Valley Plan says it will accommodate the tourists as they come by building ever increasing outlying parking lots, bus systems, and a 22 bay urban style bus depot in Yosemite Valley with buses arriving in peak season every 1.4 minutes (see YVP -- yes, it's in there).

Look at the Lower Yosemite Fall project (if you can stand it). It controls tourist pedestrian traffic through a maze of split rail fencing and obtrusive stone walls. Do not deal with impacts by putting up more fences, instead the concessioner and the National Park Service should stop marketing Yosemite as part of intensive tour packages and stop working to grow the numbers of tourists (dollars). Is this the kind of Yosemite experience you want? Separated from nature? Directed around by fencing?

Most people stay on the trails. The occasional family group or group of friends that ventures off a trail, does not degrade the values, but the NPS degrades the values through their massive construction/destruction projects. The El Portal Road widening, the unnatural grading throughout the 56 acres braided alluvial braided stream area from the ongoing Lower Fall project with the overbuilt bridges with 20' footings (inappropriate according to the NPS hydrologist in the Freedom of Information Request info we have) which will prevent natural processes (degrading the hydrologic ORV), the overbuilt bus stop in one of the most scenic areas in the world (degrading the scenic ORV), the overbuilt bathroom edifice built on top of archeologic sites (degrading the archeologic ORV), and a monument to disrespect, and on and on.

6) VALLEY PLAN PROJECTS already have been planned by the NPS based on a River Plan determined by the court to be invalid. Those projects include a myriad of interrelated plans and projects in the Yosemite Valley Plan.

These plans and projects and the Yosemite Valley Plan needs to be revisited and based on a valid/protective revised CMP/SEIS.

For Example:

*- Curry Employee Dorms and Rockfall Danger: Construction for sleeping quarters for these "lower level" employees is scheduled to begin soon. However, less than a year ago and a mere 300' from this construction area, a dangerous rockfall occurred in which rocks and boulders fell through roofs and damaged 10 inhabited duplex cabins at Curry Village,

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in which at least one person was almost hit. (documented in an NPS categorical exclusion for repairs) Perhaps the NPS planners and administrators who signed off on this plan should sleep on the top floor of these dorms? At minimum and certainly before any construction and any more planning resources are put into this project, the Valley Wall above this area needs to be thoroughly studied for rockfall potential. And the 27 planned dormitory buildings' area studied for potential bounce zone.

An NPS official told a FoYV representative at one of the scoping meetings that nps was surprised by the ricochet effect that took place.

Does NPS really intend to let employees' be potentially surprised by this ricochet effect when they are sleeping?

*- Before any more development is planned or construction commenced in Yosemite Valley, a rockfall/bounce zone/ blow down map of at least the Eastern portion of Yosemite Valley needs to be completed and incorporated into the River Plan for the public to see. Perhaps the construction of the amphitheater at Glacier Point with its attendant dynamite blasting has loosened the Valley Wall in that area? Perhaps the leach field and sewage leakage problems at the Glacier Point bathrooms have loosened the Valley Wall in that area? A geologist proposed to the National Park Service to put blue dye into the Glacier Point toilets to see where the sewage water was flowing, the NPS refused to let him do that study.

*- The Curry Employee Dorm area is also an important area which climbers use for bouldering, the "Root Canal" boulder is in that area. Yet NPS will destroy that opportunity if the Employee Dorms are built there. That area was undisturbed until nps did a preemptive logging well before any construction was scheduled to begin. The court injunction stopping tree cutting was too late for many of the trees logged to make way for the dorm construction.

*- The Yosemite Lodge Plan calls for new lodges in the River Corridor and plans to bulldoze and cut a new road adjacent to the River, rather than use the existing road which is away from the River. This project would destroy River ORVs. For example, it is now an easily accessible opportunity to enjoy a quiet walk along the river enjoying grazing deer and squawking Stellar's Jays, to contemplate the River's oxbow and meander and enjoy the water plants in the River's special backwater in that area as well as wonderful solemn views of Sentinel Peak. A road with buses driving through it would destroy that area and that experience.

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*- The closures of the Upper and Lower Rivers and Group Campgrounds by NPS in 1997 was never put out for public comment. This area was subsequently "zoned" for "Day Use" in the invalid River Plan; thereby eliminating 40% of the camping in Yosemite Valley. NPS now improperly argues that it is already "zoned" for "Day Use".- As a part of the Draft CMP/SEIS, the public should at last have the opportunity to consider and comment on the use of this area in at least one alternative.

*- The Curry Village Redevelopment Plan calls for more upscale lodging requiring more infrastructure and more employees (an additional 405 Park-wide). Who, in turn, require more infrastructure -- all this when more and more lodging since 1997, and almost each year since, has already been (and is being?) built in the gateway communities outside the Park -- violating Park Management Policies. The Plan calls for destroying undisturbed areas to replace a minute number of the 300 camping spaces closed by NPS in 1997. Instead of building new expensive resort-style hotel lodging in the Park (more profits for the concessionaire), relocate the 40% of Yosemite Valley campgrounds closed by NPS in 1997, into those "lodging" areas,- changing them into camping areas. (Protective of the ORVs of the Merced and beneficial to public values and our right to experience the natural values of the River.)

* The El Portal Area Wild and Scenic River Corridor is more important biologically than understood years ago. In addition, some River values still remain in El Portal which have been degraded or- lost elsewhere along the River.

* The El Portal Road Segment from Pohono Bridge to the 120/140 Highway split, (known also as, "Segment D"),- saved from being destructively widened in 1999 by the Court. The River Plan must protect this area's ORVs. The only way to do that is to NOT WIDEN THE ROAD. The geologic and scientific ORV in which the "U" shaped Yosemite Valley turns into the "V" shaped Yosemite Gorge is the area with the granite wall which forms this ORV. If the road were to be widened, either that ORV would be degraded or destroyed, or the road would encroach into the Merced River, and also destroy rare old Canyon Live Oaks growing along the River side of the Road. Either way, widening the road would not be protective, and in fact would be destructive.

* The Merced River Plan should not be used again as a tool to allow development plans.

7) AMEND CONCESSION SERVICES PLAN: The Concession Services Plan (CSP) was put into place 5 years after the Merced was designated a Wild and Scenic River. However, at that time, 1992, there was no valid legally

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mandated Comprehensive Plan for the Merced River. Therefore, the Concession Service Plan, along with the General Management Plan which it amended, needs to be changed to specifically ensure protection and enhancement of the ORVs of the Merced River.

In addition, the CSP will be up for renewal and change in 2007. The River Plan is a 20 year plan. NPS should not lock in the current concession plan with its myriad of concession opportunities and amenities in this River Plan. That would be an unbelievably huge mistake. However, that is precisely what the zoning in the illegal plan does. This needs to be changed.

For Example:

- * The number of hotel units and concession eating areas may need to be reduced.

- * The Merced High Sierra Camp, which is in designated wilderness, may need to be replaced with a lower impact campground due to various impacts such as the ongoing serious bacterial water contamination in the Merced River (see nps document) from horse and stock feces.

- * The concessionaire rafting (as opposed to families/individuals bringing their own raft) may need to be discontinued due to the high impact of multiple rafts entering the river at the same point and the impact of concession diesel trucks picking up the rafts in places that would otherwise be a quiet experience, such as Sentinel Beach.

8) A FULL RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES must be presented to the public which REVISE the River Plan IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE ORDER FROM THE COURT to PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE MERCED RIVER'S OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES.

We ask that these all be viable protective alternatives so the public has the opportunity to consider various valid options.

9) ALL SCOPING COMMENTS SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC by OCT 10, 04.

Put out a CD containing all the public scoping comments as written (not excerpts) so the public can know what others are concerned about and what ideas people put forward. We want this to be a public dialogue not a one-way street.

10) ACCOUNTABILITY -- OR LACK THEREOF: So where is the accountability

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for the numerous plans deemed illegal in the courts? Where is the accountability for the excessive use of resources for all the over planning and over constructing that has been done and is being planned to be done in Yosemite? Where is the accountability for the close to \$100,000,000 spent by NPS since 1997 (or what is the figure?, the public would like to know how much and exactly where it was spent?) The next time NPS builds yet another building in Yosemite, it could be built by using those truck loads of trees logged by NPS in Yosemite and by and stacking the tons of planning documents generated since 1997 for the walls and structure, we would not even want to try to list those documents.

What is the purpose of having NPS officials sign off on the Record of Decisions of planning documents? We assumed it was an attempt to hold someone accountable. But we have seen no one held accountable. The more illegal and overbuild/overblown plans and projects, the higher in rank people seem to rise.

It is a concern that the same head of planning for the River Plan that was not protective and was declared illegal in the court, is now the head of the planning for the revised plan. A fresh look at the planning process and the management tools is needed to create a protective plan with management tools that are not made to implement Yosemite Valley Plan projects, but are made to focus on Merced River ORVs and their protection. Will that happen?

B. General Categories of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River in Yosemite -- 81 miles including the Main Stem which runs from the high Sierra through Yosemite Valley, down the Merced River Gorge, and through the El Portal Administrative District; and the South Fork which runs from the high Sierra in Yosemite, and out through Wawona.

The ORVs:- biologic, scenic, geologic, scientific, cultural/archeologic, recreation, hydrologic processes. The National Park Service has stated that by being more general in their descriptions of the ORVs they can better protect the ORVs. On the contrary, in the River Plan, NPS needs to be transparent and specific in their description and discussion of the ORVs, their locations, interactions with other animals, plants, processes, etc. The public should understand the specifics of the ORVs in order to be able to help watch and follow and participate in working towards and monitoring their protection and enhancement (Except of course archeologic sites. Although, it is the NPS itself that is creating vast amounts of disturbance and degradation of archeologic sites through their construction projects). The current data and surveys

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of ORVs should be a part of the River Plan, and as data is collected, it should be put up on the NPS web site. The public that loves Yosemite and appreciates the Park's special values, can be the eyes and ears that are most helpful in the Park's and ORVs' monitoring and protection. The many knowledgeable members of the public will watch and make known if an ORV is not being protected. Wouldn't the NPS want this help?

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SEP 13 2004
 RMR-5-110
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: <yose_planning@nps.gov>

Subject: SCOPING COMMENTS ON MERCED RIVER PLAN REVISION

Yosemite Superintendent,

Is it true that Yosemite National Park was instituted in order to save the natural beauty of a special area for the people for posterity?

If so, how can we allow the area to be developed as a resort for the privileged?

I am opposed to advertising the park as an upscale bus destination.

The natural setting should be preserved for the enjoyment of all classes, not for the idle use of the privileged and the profit of the concessionaire.

A large bus bay is unacceptable.

I agree with the following statements:

The revised River Plan should have an alternative that restores these 40% of camping spots removed, but not in new areas. Moving impacts into new areas is not protecting ORVs or the ecosystem. Perhaps it is some of the Lodge buildings that should be removed. Camping could be considered to be put there for example.

So this claimed "restoration" would be on the back of Yosemite Valley campers, while unnecessary upscale resort hotels are build in Yosemite Valley. This former camping area is the main "restoration" (6% of the \$441,000.00 plan) part of the Yosemite Valley Plan. Almost all of the rest of the Yosemite Valley Plan (see the YVP) is for development, construction, concession amenities, employee housing to house the additional employees needed to support this additional infrastructure and level of services (changing motel room sheets, ice cream parlors, etc). And the Valley Plan makes clear (although the NPS press releases and public materials give the opposite impression) that the \$441,000,000 plan will bring more miles of asphalt both in Yosemite Valley and in the rest of Yosemite Park. Pretty sad. However, if the River plan is a truly protective plan, this would not happen under it. This is the litmus test of the revised River Plan that NPS will put out.

Camping in Yosemite Valley directly connects visitors with the natural values for which Yosemite was saved. An upscale resort style hotel can

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be built anywhere and is not an appropriate use of a national treasure. Camping allows lower income and other families to enjoy Yosemite's spectacular natural values on their own terms. It allows families to bring in their own supplies, their food, their bicycles, their rafts, their children's strollers, etc. They are not dependent on the concessionaire.

The average family is being more and more shut out of Yosemite as Yosemite becomes more and more of a resort/Disney style destination. This is how not only the concessionaire, but also the NPS markets Yosemite. This is not equitable. Camping is also an important opportunity for social interaction in Yosemite which builds democracy. Lodging separates people both physically from social interactions and stratifies them economically.

5) THE MARKETING OF YOSEMITE AND USER CAPACITY: While the National park

Service has eliminated any user capacity numbers for Yosemite, it markets Yosemite as a part of quickie all-in-one-day tour packages -- actively enticing more people to tour and impact the Park's natural values. The Park Service then claims that it has to accommodate these tourists with ever increasing amounts of and increasingly upscaled types of accommodations.

Usually people on such tour packages spend a mere few hours in Yosemite, while leaving dollars in the concessionaires pockets and a large impact on Yosemite's resources. Rather than taking home a priceless in-depth experience of Yosemite's natural values, they rush from spot to spot to take quick photos, purchase souvenirs, and eat. Rather than Yosemite leaving a lasting impact on them, their impact leaves a lasting impression on Yosemite.

National Park Service press release: "Yosemite National Park Employees Attend Travel Expo [in China] to Promote Tourism to National Parks"
http://www.yosemitevalley.org/HTML/Articles/2002_07_01.html

Now that the Court has ordered NPS to adequately address user capacities, how will this mesh with the concession and the nps marketing of Yosemite? The Yosemite Valley Plan says it will accommodate the tourists as they come by building ever increasing outlying parking lots, bus systems, and a 22 bay urban style bus depot in Yosemite Valley with buses arriving in peak season every 1.4 minutes (see YVP -- yes, it's in there).

Sincerely,

Mariposa CA

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SEP 13 2004
RMR-5-109
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Revised Merced River Plan

Please consider the following in revising the NPS plan for the El Portal portion of the Merced River:

Scenic and recreational values cannot be replaced! The river deserves all the protection it can be given within the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Part of the experience of driving from the lowlands, through the foothills, into the mountains and into Yosemite National Park is the transition of the scenery. El Portal is the most used, all year route into the valley. The canyon affords the experience of the narrow, water-carved river canyon, opening at El Portal with a vista and first look at a granite wall. The water tumbling over the rocks, the many places to stop and look, take a swim, are very special to both the park visitor and the local resident. The section from park line to Foresta Bridge is used for boating and fishing from early Spring, and swimming all Summer long. The private land just outside the park had been developed to "over-capacity" and there is no stopping the landowner or Mariposa County from continuing. Only with the vision of the NPS can the remainder of the local river corridor be protected. It would be against all NPS standards to violate the canyon further with development of housing and commercial use within the allowable boundary. I encourage the protection of the river corridor to be to the full extent possible with the boundary as wide as possible.

The impact on the Park of the increase in visitors over the past 10 years is dramatic. The addition of over 800 rooms in El Portal, and the resultant traffic puts a lot of stress on the natural environs of the area.

Part of any plan for El Portal should include transportation for the residents and visitors that is cheap (free), regular and easy to access. There is no need to wait to implement this. It could be done right away, and the County should be asked to participate. There should be limits on how many cars are in the valley on given (especially busy) days and mandatory bus use when the valley is full. The trailer village area of El Portal should be a parking area for park visitors. It did not flood in the flood of 97 and could be used all year, with easy transportation to Badger Pass. This information could be sent out to park visitors who inquire on line or by phone about travel to Yosemite. Park employees, many of whom have been here for a long time and live in El Portal are impacted by the traffic to and from work. Many drive from Midpines and Mariposa and would welcome the choice to ride from El Portal if the transportation were reliable and convenient.

The opportunity to review the protection of the Merced River in El Portal is the opportunity to make it better!

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Thank you,

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El Portal, CA

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SEP 13 2004
 2MR-5-108
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
 cc:
 Subject: Fwd: Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition scoping comments for the
 New Merced River Plan

Note: forwarded message attached.

----- Message from
 2004 10:22:23 -0700 (PDT) -----

> on Fri, 10 Sep

To: www.yose_planning@nps.gov

Subject Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition scoping comments for the New Merced River
 : Plan

Dear NPS Staff:

Attached please find the scoping comments for the New Merced River Plan .

Please reply to confirm receipt of this transmission.

Sincerely,



Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition YVCC comments to the NPS 09-10-04

YOSEMITE VALLEY CAMPERS COALITION

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09-10-04

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW AND IMPROVED MERCED RIVER PLAN(MRP)

The 9th Circuit Appeals Court ruled that the MRP was invalid. Specific problem areas requiring more attention were 1) user capacity, and 2) boundaries at El Portal. Though the Court remanded the Plan back to the District Court to remedy the deficiencies, they made it clear that "they did not otherwise uphold the CMP." Thus, a "revision" is a gross misrepresentation of reality by the NPS in an attempt to continue its commercialization of Yosemite Valley at the expense of historical and traditional campground areas in the valley and camping sites in the Valley.

The new and improved MRP must truly put not only the protection of the river corridor FIRST, but also protection of the natural resources Valley-wide. And we Campers do just that. And, please do not use the actions of a few bad/inexperienced campers and/or lack of NPS supervision to negate the proper stewardship of Yosemite Valley's resources. We have come along way, NPS and Campers, from the 1960's; that "out of control" time in history is behind us and Campers should not be shackled with that history nor pay an extra price for that time.

Any adverse impacts that campers may have on the Merced River are restored in the nine (9) non-camping months. The fact that campers are self-contained, in and of themselves, greatly eliminates all of the following activities that result in resource destruction:

- Clear cutting to make way for hard-sided lodging
- Clear cutting to widen and create new roads
- Blacktopping widened and new roads and parking lots
- More vendors in and out of the Valley to provide goods and services to support upscale hard sided lodging, restaurants and to maintain facilities
- More employees in and out of the Valley to provide goods and services to support facilities, their guests
- More housing and support facilities for employees
- More parking for employees
- Rafting concessions, which point load the river banks (campers bring their own, are dispersed, and are irregular users

Other critical camping issues include, but are not limited to:

- Re-open ALL campgrounds closed after the '97 Flood, restore the original historical campsites, including "Group Campground" on Tenaya Creek as it will disperse impacts on the environment while preventing the "compression" of campers
- Curtail all specific amenities for RV's; implement length limitation to 23 feet
- Make and maintain campsites and adjoining facilities such as hose bibs, drinking fountains, restrooms ADA compliant
- River Floating: From the standpoint of visitor experience, reference is made to the NPS 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) paragraphs (s) on Page 22 defining the visitor experience. "Park Experience--Enjoying the special attributes of Yosemite. The human need for physical and mental activities congruent with the park's primary purpose--activities that can be

appropriately enjoyed at Yosemite; programs for doing, thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship to Yosemite's resources."

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"Provide only for those types and levels of programs and activities that enhance visitor understanding and enjoyment of park resources...The visitor experience will consist of opportunities for educational and park-related recreational pursuits such as walking and hiking, backpacking, and Merced River floating."

Both of these paragraphs remind tens of thousands of campers of what we feel at Yosemite. However, the NPS has allowed the concessionaire to co-opt those activities and commercialize/mass produce them for profit. By commercializing and mass-producing (as in rentals), the NPS has destroyed the very qualities (thinking, dreaming, and being in relationship to Yosemite's resources) that made them special in the first place. By Campers bringing our own tube or raft and floating down the Merced, we are enjoying one of the lowest impact ways to experience Yosemite Valley in Summer. Often, we enjoy this activity as one floater in one floatation device versus the concession multiple use rafter that cycles in mass both in and out of the riverbanks. The NPS just looks the other way at the daily mass concession floating events that have caused the problems. Our stand, let people bring their own equipment; they will self-select their participation based on whether they want to go through the hassle. There is no need for a rental facility, a place for hundreds of rentals to enter the river--all at the same location, a pick up location with a big diesel bus and box truck, etc.

The greatest enjoyable, tranquil, breathtaking, scenic view of the Valley is absorbed while floating down the Merced River, no question about it!

Other critical issues:

- All Park bathrooms ADA compliant
- Provide a detailed accounting of public funds (specific income sources (including the "Gate Surcharge," and expenditure cost centers (including where the Gate Surcharges have been spent) to justify and ensure proper oversight of tax revenues
- Eliminate diesel buses, equipment, trash trucks, and maintenance vehicles in the Valley
- Upgrade and maintain facilities for campers such as more water hose bibs in campgrounds with waste water drains to sanitary sewer, cold water showers at restrooms with waste water drains to sanitary sewer, scrub and sanitize the restroom floors, concrete pave around the restrooms for trip/risk reduction as well as ADA compliance, hooks and shelves in the restrooms in a user friendly manner, etc.
- Bridges and Campsites qualify for and need to become National Historical Register Landmarks
- Concession profits need to be secondary to resource protection
- Historically and currently, Campers are disenfranchised and ignored. Direct notification for any planning events, dating back to the 1980 GMP (General Management Plan), although practical and feasible, have never been done
- Re-visit the entire issue of Land Use Zoning in light of the ORV's, Carrying Capacity, and Land Use Management in the context of Yosemite Valley
- Scoping locations have been narrowly selected; they should have included: San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, San Joaquin Valley, Sacramento, and other areas
- *"In 1993, Delaware North landed a 15 - year contract to manage food and lodging at America's oldest national park. The government and Delaware North negotiated a deal that gives the*

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concessionaire a little more freedom in the park in exchange for a higher percentage of revenue being returned to the park. Under the new contract as much as 20 percent of revenue Delaware North derives will go to the government. However, much of that money will be funneled directly back to the park to improve facilities. "We see this as a win-win situation," Jacobs says. "It is an opportunity for us to 'exploit' the natural assets of the park in a way that actually complements the park, instead of harming it." ("Jeremy M. Jacobs: Delaware North's Intrepid Captain Loves 'The Thrill of the Deal'", by Paul King, Nation's Restaurant News, January 27, 1997.)

- "Yosemite should be a nature center, not a profit center." (Environmental icon, David Brower)

At the Subcommittee Hearing held in the Park on April 20, 2003, Paul Minault of The Access Fund, provided an excellent analysis on the value of camping as a resource-focused activity:

National Park Service management policy is to "encourage visitor activities that foster an understanding of, and appreciation for, park resources and values, or will promote enjoyment through a direct association with, interaction with, or relation to park resources."

Management

Policy 2001-8.2 Visitor Use (emphasis added). In our comments to the Valley Plan, we listed the ways in which camping enhances the visitor experience, furthers park values, and promotes the enjoyment of Yosemite National Park through a direct association with park resources.

- ° *First, we pointed out that camping is a form of recreation, unlike lodging in developed accommodations, which is a form of leisure.*
- ° *Second, camping promotes a closer relationship to park resources than any other form of overnight accommodation.*
- ° *Third, camping distances the visitor from the commercial values of comfort and convenience and the expression of social status through consumption that pervade American society. Camping brings the visitor closer to nature, the simple necessities of daily life, and the way People lived in the past.*
- ° *Fourth, camping is democratic. In campgrounds, social distinctions account for little, and camping has the potential to bring people together in shared appreciation of their natural surroundings in a manner that reduces social barriers. Unfortunately, the lodging picture in Yosemite preserves the social distinctions of the greater society, rather than leveling them, which we believe should be a goal of the parks.*
- ° *Fifth, camping is inherently communal. Campers have an enhanced opportunity to associate with other people, develop new relationships, and broaden their social horizons. Unfortunately, the Valley Plan largely ignored these values, with the result that camping suffered the loss of 300 campsites in the Valley. Instead, the park now emphasizes exclusive and expensive lodging over traditional camping accommodations that are more in line with NPS management policies.*

We feel the most critical issue at this juncture is to open scoping to reflect the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals interpretation and then bring in all the stakeholders into the planning, decision-making, implementing, and ongoing monitoring of the NEW and IMPROVED Merced River Plan. Yosemite Valley Campers Coalition awaits an invitation.

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SEP 13 2004
RMR-5-107
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
 cc:
 Subject: Rethinking new construction-MERCED RIVER PLAN REVISION

Regarding MERCED RIVER PLAN REVISION. Please consider reducing the need for new construction in Yosemite Valley. It is not necessary to build up the valley with more services and concessions. By avoiding this build up, the need for new buildings in Yosemite is no longer there. This is one of America's most precious national parks and new concrete and asphalt being placed in the ground is not contributing to anyone's experience of the natural beauty found here. The valley is already overcrowded in the summer months. If anything, please take steps to reduce crowding, not promote it. Refer to Zion or Joshua Tree for good examples.

Thanks,

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To: <yose_planning@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: SCOPING COMMENTS ON MERCED RIVER PLAN REVISION - and
general planning comments

Dear Yosemite National Park Superintendent:

To follow are my ideas and concerns regarding the Merced River Plan Revision and the Park's planning process.

I appreciate the extension of the comment period. However, in the future, please provide more advanced notice regarding requests for public input and public meeting notices. I did not receive the original notice, dated August 5, until August 9. The public meetings were one week later.

Your letter requested comments regarding alternative approaches for accomplishing project goals and comments regarding information that needs to be considered when making decisions, among other suggestions. To that end, I strongly suggest that you present comments and scientific analysis prepared by Natural Resource division staff in all public documents. It is my knowledge that such comments are maintained in a database. I understand that I could pursue a Freedom of Information Act request, but it would be appreciated if you would make these comments available to the public without creating the additional administrative burden of this type of request. The ecologists and natural resource experts in the department have the best knowledge and understanding regarding the vulnerability of habitats and other values of the Merced River watershed. By reading the range of staff input regarding the Merced River Plan, those who have a concern about the ecological values and environmental integrity of the park can make informed comments based on first-hand information and not second-hand interpretations in planning and environmental review documents.

In terms of a point by point analysis of the Merced River Plan, I am not making specific comments, but for the record, I am in agreement with the point of view of the group Friends of Yosemite Valley.

Generally, I would like to see a Merced River Plan (and all Yosemite planning documents) that focuses on preserving/restoring ecological values to the park and promotes/inspires minimal impact use of the Park. To me, this means that demolition/construction projects -- especially ones that REQUIRE the CLEAR CUTTING OF TREES - be avoided at all times. This project type serves to benefit only the commercial aspects of the park - with no benefit to the environment whatsoever. In fact, these types of projects offer most users no added connection to the natural environment and gives our national treasure a plastic feel.

I was horrified to see the trees cut next to the Yosemite Lodge and at the front of the Upper Pines campground. These projects seems senseless to me, especially when other projects can be implemented that enhance the environment, rather than destroy it. For example, in the flood plain, restoration of the permanently lost campgrounds there has progressed at a snail's pace. The area has looked like a waste land. Why has the park service not focused on restoring this area to its most natural condition, especially

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given that this is a great opportunity to have a development-free area that shows off beautiful riparian and meadow habitats that attract a diversity of birds and other wildlife? Numerous school groups and other volunteer organizations would likely jump at the chance to work on the area, if given the proper resources and prioritization by the Park Service, assuming these are the barriers.

Finally, Yosemite Valley is a watershed. The Merced River is the core of that watershed and is affected by the numerous projects and impacts from EVERY tributary (including Yosemite Falls/Yosemite Creek) in the watershed. Nationwide, it well known that watersheds need to be looked at holistically and not in pieces, which is how Yosemite has reviewed each project. This is wrong and goes against established watershed science, preservation and restoration principles, and scientifically-established best practices.

Sincerely,

San Francisco, Ca

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SEP 13 2004
RMR-S-105
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: respect for yosemite

There are plenty of theme parks but only 1 Yosemite, do not try to make it another theme park. Respect the park. The only thing to do is reopen the camp grounds that were closed after the flood in 1997.

Do you Yahoo!?

Shop for Back-to-School deals on Yahoo! Shopping.

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SEP 13 2004
RMR-5-104
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: comments

Hello ~

Thank you for the opportunity to comment...

I walk the river in El Portal almost everyday. In the winter I see Great Blue Herons everywhere along the river. In late summer there are the hundreds of multi-color dragonflies. There are coyote and bear that come to enjoy.

In the stretch of river by the trailer park and through Abbeyville (by my house), there are thousands of caddis flies that start their life. Stoneflies leave their shells on the rocks. The pools there are special places for native fish like the rainbow trout and Sacramento sucker, as well as stocked fish.

I hope my comments help. I was not sure of what to say. I trust that you will try your best to represent this special area.

Thanks you for all you do,

El Portal, CA

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SEP 13 2004
PMR-S-103
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: <Yose_planning@nps.gov>

Subject: Revised Merced River Plan

Thank you for encouraging input for Merced River Plan revision . . . but I would ask that you consider changing your process of planning altogether. I know that this input is federally mandated by NEPA, so you are in compliance with the law, but the spirit of this law is that federal agencies work together with affected public to bring about results that all can live with, not just token input.

That is why I ask that you set aside the current Merced River Plan and the Yosemite Valley Plan, and form a planning team that would be comprised of representatives from all interested parties. This team would be charged with not only developing a plan that all can live with, but monitoring the outcome and revising as necessary. That way the Park Service would not constantly be in conflict with its public, and not be solely responsible for the outcome. After all, the Parks do belong to the public, and the Park Service ideally should be caretakers, not decision-makers.

This idea may seem a little radical, but it is not new, and has been done quite successfully in other countries. I know that I am addressing only the Planning Department of Yosemite, and that you may not have the authority to make this happen, but you are in a position to pursue it. I am also forwarding a copy of my request to higher authorities, in hopes that the historical adversarial relationship between the public and the Park Service can be changed to a peaceful partnership that will secure the future of Yosemite and all the National Parks.

Oakhurst

cc: Supt. M. Tollefson, Dir. G. Norton, Rep. G. Radanovich, Sen. D. Feinstein

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SEP 13 2004
RmR-5-102
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: yose_planning@nps.gov
cc:
Subject: Re: scoping for Merced River

We have a family reunion every summer in sites along the river in Lower Pines campground. The grandchildren, nieces, and nephews range in age from 1 to 12. They spend a huge percentage of their time playing along the river. We have heard (only rumor, we hope!) that all camping might be moved AWAY from the river, that Lower Pines would be closed. In case that is true, our family would like to register our voice in favor of RETAINING the Lower Pines sites as they now exist!! We already lost half of that campground when officials chose not to replace the sites that were damaged in the flood, and the remaining sites are very precious to us. Being on the river is an integral part of our camping experience! We would encourage those in power to regulate the river FOR the use of the public and not FROM the public.

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SEP 13 2004
 RMR-S-101
 YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: <yose_planning@nps.gov>
 cc:
 Subject: Merced River Plan SEIS Comments

More wild river; less development.

An alternative to keep it wild. Not a perfunctory alternative...a real alternative, with full and rigorous analysis. Be creative.

Less asphalt in Yosemite. Everywhere.

And leave the trees alone. Fire is not our enemy.

From a grandmother,

Live Oak, California

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SEP 13 2004
RMR-5-113
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

To: <Yose_Planning@nps.gov>
cc:
Subject: Comments for the YOSE Scoping process...

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<?xml:namespace prefix = v ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:vml"
/><?xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office" />
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September 10, 2004

On behalf of the 300,000 members of the National Parks Conservation Association we offer this response to your scoping process for Yosemite National Park.

In reviewing the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) Framework we raise the following issues:

-On pages 45 through 64 in the User Capacity Management Program for the Merced Wild and Scenic River Corridor there are a number of indicators listed to prevent overuse including: campsite number, campsite condition, number of encounters with other parties, people at one time at selected sites, exposed tree roots, number of social trails, length of social trails in meadows, river bank erosion that is accelerated or caused by visitor use and water quality. At the end of each listed there are potential options for management action, which will directly affect how the visitor is to react in that area. **ISSUE: How do you plan to re-educate the visitor about the closures and other management action you plan to use to prevent overuse?**

-In reviewing the indicators listed above and the potential options for management action there are a number of mentions of a quota system, closures, signage, removal of roadside turnouts, fencing, interpretive signs and law enforcement action. **ISSUE: There is no mention of alternative transportation. NPCA is committed to working with the Park Service and local communities to ensure that visitors are offered options in how they access the park.**

Overall the National Parks Conservation Association supports the work the National Park Service is doing on the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) Framework as part of the Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (Merced River Plan). We believe this plan is a major step forward in protecting both the Merced River and the Valley. We also understand there are challenges and trade-offs that lie ahead in implementing the Yosemite Valley Plan. However, we are convinced that the plan will provide a quality experience for future visitors while protecting the natural and cultural resources -- the hydrology of the Merced River, the geology of the Valley's formations, the ecology of the region, the archeology and all that is unique to Yosemite.

Sincerely,

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Central Valley Field Representative
National Parks Conservation Association

SEP 13 2004
RmR-5-113
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

The National Parks Conservation Association is America's only private, non-profit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving and enhancing the National Park System. NPCA was founded in 1919 and has more than 300,000 members.